



Blueberries **Fact Sheet**



Where did they come from?

Blueberries have origins in both Europe and the United States. Blueberries have been around for thousands of years and were once called “star berries” because of their star-shaped crown on the top of the berry. Native Americans were the first to incorporate berries into their diets. Lewis and Clark found that Indians in the Northwest Territory smoked wild blueberries to preserve them for the winters. One of the first meals exchanged between Lewis and Clark and the Indians was venison that had wild blueberries pounded into the meat. The cultivated blueberry, the variety that is primarily sold fresh, was a development made in the 1900's by a New Jersey botanist, Frederick Coville. He crossed different varieties of wild blueberries to create an easily grown blueberry for gardens and farms.

Where do they grow?

Blueberries are native to North America where 95% of commercial blueberries are grown between the United States and Canada. Michigan and New Jersey together produce 66% of all the blueberries in the United States. Michigan produces 41% and New Jersey produces 25%. Other states, which grow blueberries, include North Carolina, Oregon and Washington. Maine and Eastern Canada grow wild blueberries, since these grow well in cool climates. Blueberry season ranges from mid-April to late September beginning in the southern states and moving north as the season continues. Frozen blueberries are available year round.

How do they grow?

Cultivated blueberries, which are the most common variety seen in the supermarkets, are grown on thousands of farms across the United States. Blueberry plants grow on a bush. They like moist, well-drained acidic soils. Today, most of them are grown on highbush plants which are 10 to 15 feet in height. These highbushes are easier for hand or machine picking. Blueberries are grown in clusters that do not ripen all at the same time. Sometimes the blueberries on the bottom of the clusters may be ripe while the fruit on top are still green. On average it takes about two to five weeks for blueberries to ripen on the bush.

Are they healthy?

- 👉 Good source of vitamin C, potassium, phosphorus, iron,
- 👉 High in soluble fiber which helps lower cholesterol
- 👉 Contains anthocyanin, a disease fighting and anti-aging substance
(Eating blueberries each day, may help keep the gray away!)

How do you pick good ones?

- 👉 Look for those with deep blue color
- 👉 Skins should have a white sheen called a “bloom” which is a sign of freshness
- 👉 Should be firm, dry, plump and smooth skinned
- 👉 Frozen blueberries should rattle in the bag; If frozen in a clump, it indicates that they were thawed and refrozen

☺ FUN FACTS! ☺

Blueberries

Did you know...

- ☺ Did you know only 1/2 cup of blueberries equals one serving of your 5 a day?
- ☺ Did you know over 200 million pounds of blueberries are produced each year in North America?
- ☺ Did you know blueberries contain more disease-fighting antioxidants than almost any other fruit or vegetable?
- ☺ Did you know blueberries are the second most popular berries in the United States? What do you think the favorite berry is? (*Strawberries are our favorite!*)
- ☺ Did you know there are two varieties of blueberries; cultivated, and wild?
(Wild blueberries are much smaller than the cultivated ones that we commonly eat fresh. The wild ones are usually sold in cans or as frozen. They also have a chewy, stronger flavor.)
- ☺ Did you know that there are 1,600 wild blueberries in a pound and 500 cultivated blueberries in a pound?
- ☺ Did you know blueberries are also available dried?
(Dried blueberries make a great healthy snack! They can be used in recipes, just as you would use raisins.)
- ☺ Did you know that if you dust fresh blueberries with flour, just before you add them to a batter that they will not sink to the bottom of the pan?

Remember ...

Include 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day!



School Food Service Link.....

Quick Steps to 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day at school...

Listed below are suggestions that you may choose at your own discretion

RECIPES:

- ✓ Try a new recipe with blueberries ---
Blueberry Muffin Squares (USDA B-20a)
Blueberry Delight (see attached)
- ✓ Offer blueberries with whipped topping or vanilla yogurt for lunch
- ✓ Offer blueberry crisp or cobbler
- ✓ Add blueberries to fruit salads and tossed salads
- ✓ Offer fresh blueberries as a topping for cereal at breakfast
- ✓ Offer a blueberry sauce as a topping for pancakes, waffles or French toast for breakfast or lunch
- ✓ Serve blueberry muffins for breakfast, lunch or After School Snack

MARKETING:

- ✓ Check out the North American Blueberry Council for ideas and resources www.blueberry.org
- ✓ Advertise and highlight the fruit or vegetable of the month on your menu
- ✓ Refer to "Fruits & Vegetables Galore" Kit (*Meal Appeal Manual*) page 9

PROMOTIONS:

- ✓ Promote a "Sticker Day" with prizes on featured fruit/vegetable menu day; Give this menu a special name!
(Examples: Build Brain Power---Eat Blueberries! Blast Off with Blueberries!)
- ✓ Feature Red-White-Blue fruit desserts for Flag Day! Line up soufflés cups filled with cherries and topping, and a row of blueberries with topping
- ✓ Feature "Blue Day" on the day that you offer blueberries on your menu
 - ✓ Encourage the entire school to get involved
 - ✓ Reward students with a small prize if they are wearing blue
- ✓ Turn your salad bar into a self-serve topping bar for breakfast or lunch; Let them create a "Yogurt Sundae!"
 - ✓ Distribute 4 ounces of low-fat yogurt
 - ✓ Offer assorted frozen, canned and dried fruits, granola, nuts... at the topping bar (*Be sure to offer blueberries!*)
 - ✓ Let students add their own toppings for a healthy fruit'n'yogurt treat!
- ✓ Refer to "Fruits & Vegetables Galore" Kit (*Meal Appeal Manual*) pages 16-31

Presentation Meal Appeal -----

Place Fruits and Vegetables at the Beginning of the Line to Promote their Selection!

Quality:

Thaw Frozen Fruit in Refrigerator! Use Immediately When Thawed to Maintain Freshness!

Safety:

Wash Produce Before You Cut so the Knife Does Not Become Contaminated!



School Food Service Link.....



School Food Service Recipes



Blueberry Delight

Yield: 130 each 4 oz. servings

Recipe From: Mary Farmer, Upper Deerfield Twp. School District

Ingredients:

- 1 each 30 lb. Box of Frozen Blueberries
- 1 each 16 oz. Box of Cornstarch
- 1 lb of Butter or Margarine
- 5 cups Sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Lemon Juice
- 3 Tbsp. Vanilla Extract
- 2 Tbsp. Lemon Extract
- 1 each 10.8 oz. Bag Whipped Topping (follow directions on bag)

Directions:

Combine in a large steam pot blueberries, butter, sugar, vanilla, lemon juice and lemon extract. Bring to a boil. Remove 1 qt. blueberry juice and mix with cornstarch. Pour back into blueberries to thicken. Cook 20 minutes until blueberry mixture thickens.

Cool down blueberries in two four-inch steam pans for 15 minutes. While still warm use #8 scoop and dip into clear plastic 5 oz. dessert dishes. Refrigerate for one hour. Use #30 scoop to garnish with whipped topping before serving to your customers.